



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

MICHIGAN MAN PLEADS GUILTY IN SCHEME TO SMUGGLE ALIENS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST TO THE UNITED STATES

-- Was one of 4 people charged last year from ring accused of smuggling roughly 200 aliens --

WASHINGTON, D.C. – United States Attorney Kenneth L. Wainstein, John C. Richter, Acting Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice, and John P. Clark Homeland Security Deputy Assistant Secretary for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), today announced that Minas Mirza, 42, also known as “Jack” and “Nino”, of Warren, Michigan, pleaded guilty on August 19, 2005, to two counts of alien smuggling.

Mirza, who entered his guilty pleas before Judge Rosemary M. Collyer of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, faces a maximum of 10 years of imprisonment for violating 8 U.S.C. 11324 (a) (2) (B) (ii), admitting that he brought **two** aliens into the United States for commercial advantage and private financial gain. Mirza also faces a fine of \$250,000.

Mirza’s guilty plea arose from his being charged along with three other defendants with smuggling aliens, including citizens of Iraq and other countries in the Middle East, into the United States primarily through South America. The defendants were charged in a five-count superceding indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Washington, D.C., on September 29, 2004, charging them with conspiracy to smuggle aliens into the United States beginning in early 2001 up through the present and bringing unauthorized aliens to the United States for commercial advantage or private financial gain.

According to the indictment, defendant Neeran Zaia owned a business called Universal Investment & Law Services, which she used as a conduit for alleged alien smuggling activities, advertising in Detroit media outlets, including an Arab-language magazine. Ms. Zaia and a co-conspirator also allegedly operated “Saudi-Jordan,” a travel agency located in Amman, Jordan, and met there with migrants who wished to enter the United States.

The indictment alleges that Ms. Zaia and a co-conspirator recruited aliens in Iraq and Jordan who wished to be taken to the United States in exchange for the payment or promised payment of money

often for thousands of dollars. Ms. Zaia allegedly represented to the migrants that she could procure the appropriate documents to facilitate that travel, in exchange for those payments.

The indictment further alleges that Ms. Zaia and other conspirators promised aliens U.S. visas, but after securing partial payments for those visas, instead provided the aliens with visas from countries in South America. The defendants would allegedly transport the aliens to South American countries as a staging area for entry into the United States, and then once the aliens were in South America, they would demand additional money to bring them into the United States.

In the course of his guilty plea, Mirza admitted his role in the conspiracy and specifically to his having coordinated the arrangements to smuggle **two** aliens into the United States for personal financial gain and to having personally driven two aliens from Washington, D.C. to Detroit, Michigan. A sentencing date has not yet been scheduled.

In announcing the guilty plea, U.S. Attorney Wainstein, Acting Assistant Attorney General Richter and ICE Deputy Assistant Secretary Clark commended the extraterritorial investigation led by Special Agents of the Washington, D.C field office, ICE Headquarters, and assisted by others from the Detroit ICE Office. The State Department's Diplomatic Security Service also assisted with the investigation.

They also commended Assistant United States Attorney Bruce R. Hegyi of the U.S. Attorney's Office in the District of Columbia, and Trial Attorneys Jim U. Oliver, Jr. and Judith O'Sullivan of the Domestic Security Section of the Criminal Division at the U.S. Department of Justice, who are prosecuting the cases.

#ICE#

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.